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ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION
GROUP SHOWS GROWTH IN DECADE

By Hal Mathew
UM Information Services

MISSOULA--

A small committee, first organized in Missoula a decade ago, is gaining strength and effectiveness in its mission to make Montana citizens aware of and capable of halting the degradation of their environment.

The Western Montana Scientists' Committee for Public Information (WISCPI--pronounced Wimsippy) is more muscular now than in its early years, thanks to a \$50,000 grant last summer from the National Science Foundation.

The grant allowed the committee to hire a research assistant, expand its public lending library, establish a lecture series and generally improve its ability to inform the public of the scientific aspects of environmental pollution.

Many of the 30 committee members are associated with the University of Montana, although the committee itself is not directly connected with the school. Dr. Clancy C. Gordon, UM botany professor, is WISCPI program director.

Other officers are Dr. Chris Field, associate professor of geography, chairman; Dr. M.J. Law, Missoula physician and UM lecturer, vice-chairman, and Dr. George F. Weisel, zoology professor, secretary-treasurer.

The committee, formed in 1961 as the Western Montana Scientists' Committee for Radiation Information, was co-founded by Dr. E.W. Pfeiffer, professor of zoology, and Dr. Meyer Chessin, professor of botany.

The group changed its name and began a library in 1964.

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In December, 1969, the committee asked the National Science Foundation for \$78,850; in June, 1970, it received \$49,550 for two years of operation.

The money is used mainly for the lending library, a lecture series, a speakers' bureau and production of a 16 mm film on environmental pollution in Montana.

The library, housed in a tiny, crowded room on the top floor of the Natural Sciences Building on campus, is operated by Mrs. Sylvia Morey, the committee's research assistant.

All the material can be checked out and the library is used by faculty, students and the general public from Missoula and throughout the state. Mrs. Morey also mails out materials on request and estimates that 500 people have used the library services in the past three months.

In addition to printed materials, the library contains 5,600 slides and four movies on assorted ecology problems which are available free to schools and interested groups.

The lecture series began Oct. 5 and was used by the University the first two quarters as a course--Environmental Studies 391.

Thus far 17 speakers from Montana and throughout the nation have covered scientific, medical, legal, political and social aspects of environmental pollution. The final three lectures this spring will be given by UM faculty members.

The National Science Foundation grant provided special funds for the committee to publish the lecture series as a book, which will be distributed to schools and libraries throughout the state.

The speakers' bureau includes the 30 WMSCPI members, all of whom have specialized interests and backgrounds in ecology. They are available for speaking engagements through the committee headquarters.

For further information regarding activities and services of the program, write to:

WMSCPI Library
Natural Sciences Building
University of Montana
Missoula, Montana 59801

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